

**Savannah City Government
SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES
MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
WORK SESSION
February 7, 2013 – 10:00 am**

PRESENT: Mayor Edna B. Jackson, Presiding
Alderman Van R. Johnson, II Mayor Pro-tem
Aldermen Tony Thomas, Chairman of Council
Alderman Mary Osborne, Vice-Chairman of Council
Aldermen John Hall, Carol Bell, Alderman Mary Ellen Sprague
Tom Bordeaux and Estella Shabazz

Acting City Manager Stephanie S. Cutter
City Attorney W. Brooks Stillwell

Mayor Jackson called the meeting to order.

The Mayor stated that Georgia Power was celebrating the underground dig they have been doing in the area; she had to leave and Alderman Van R. Johnson, II Mayor Pro-tem took over the meeting.

Step Up Savannah

Michael Traynor, new Chair of Step Up Savannah introduced himself, recognized and thanked several board and staff members that were present at the work session. He gave a brief overview of the organization and said its mission is to work collaboratively to reduce poverty in Savannah and Chatham County. He then introduced Daniel Dodd-Ramirez, Executive Director of Step Up Savannah, and said they would take questions at the end. Mr. Ramirez reminded everyone that the organization was actually borne out of the City's initiative and innovation to really look at the issue of poverty. It started with Mayor Floyd Adams' task force, made a priority under Mayor Otis Johnson, and has continued under Mayor Jackson as a priority for City Council and the community. He then provided a presentation on the organization's efforts to decrease poverty in Savannah and Chatham County. He explained how they attract new resources, enhance the capacity of direct service providers, and train Neighborhood Leaders. He also described the Workforce Development and Wealth Building programs, and discussed educating and advocating in the field of public policy.

Mr. Ramirez stated that Savannah has had a 22 per cent poverty rate for over 30 years and in 2010 it went up to 25 percent, matching the 3 point increase seen around the country; in Georgia, it went up 6 points. He said that in Savannah, 33.1% of children under the age of 18, 71% of households headed by single women, 30.9% of African Americans and 17.8 % of whites all live in poverty. Alderman Sprague asked if Council could get a copy of that data as it wasn't included in their handout and he stated that he would get that to them. He gave the federal description for poverty which is \$23,000 for a family of four, but stated that self-sufficiency is about \$45,000 for a family of four. The federal government's definition has not been updated other than for cost of living, and does not take into account items such as housing and transportation which are known to be very crucial and significant. Even though New York City has thrown it out and adopted their own measure, most programs are still based on this measure.

Mr. Ramirez then presented a table with an overview of the Median Service Sector Wages in Savannah. He said it was developed with help from the City and can be downloaded from the organization's website. He said they work with the West Broad Street Y and want to build alliances with other similar organizations in the community. He also noted they were spotlighted at the recent National League of Cities conference and pointed out California State Treasurer Cisneros in one of the slides. He stated that originally Step Up Savannah was 90% funded by the City, but now receives one-third of their funding from the City. Alderman Bell asked him what year the organization started and he stated 2005. He said City funding has not gone away, but rather they are always looking to leverage the City's investment in the organization. Funding sources like the Kresge Foundation include private foundation grants, corporate and personal donations, and the county and state have all invested in their program, but they still need more frontline assistance. He also stated that all the money that comes in does not stay with Step Up, and some of the money gets disbursed to other local organizations.

He stated that Savannah has very strong and cohesive neighborhood associations and Step Up trains these neighborhood leaders. He says there is a need for more of these leaders and they have restarted the Neighborhood Leadership Academy with nearly 50 adults graduating in 2011-2012. He then introduced Suzanne Donovan, Communications Director with Step Up Savannah who gave an overview of the program which focuses on helping develop a person's voice, how to identify problem areas, and develop strategies to address the issues. The program runs for twelve-weeks, they meet Monday nights at Savannah State University, and their presentations are made by City staff and other leaders in the community.

The Mayor then stated she had to leave, and in the event she did not make it back, asked that they include an update on the Home Depot Foundation in their presentation. She also asked that Boards, Commissions & Authorities be rescheduled for the work session on February 21, 2013 since the agenda was so full and one of the Council members did not receive her appointment binder. She stated that Alderman Sprague and City Attorney Brooks Stillwell could bring everyone up-to-date on LOST when they go into their executive session and then thanked everyone for coming.

Mr. Ramirez said that Step Up is a very competitive program and just recently only 15 were admitted out of 50 applicants. Alderman Shabazz inquired about the application process, and he said they should give people their phone number which is 912-232-6747 and also that applications are available on their website. Alderman Hall said he wants to see similar programs throughout the City as they are much needed, and wondered how they could be blended together. Alderman Johnson stated there was an older program called Super Saturday, but it has since disappeared. Alderman Bell said that Super Saturday is a somewhat abbreviated version of this program; neighborhood presidents would be targeted for a workshop-type forum and it could serve as a sort of resident boot camp. Alderman Hall asked when it would get started, Alderman Bell said sometime this year and that she has agreed to work with them. Alderman Osborne said this was started under Don Mondonsa many years ago, but its presentation was very diluted. She thought it might be a good idea to look at both programs' criteria and fuse the best components of each into the shorter program. Alderman Bell also asked that Step Up's facilitators be made available for this program and Mr. Ramirez said they would definitely work with them to bring this together. Stephanie Cutter, Acting City Manager stated that Margaret Williams is the staff person who works closely with Alderman Bell and Taffanye Young.

Mr. Ramirez said one of their biggest challenges and an area of great importance to Step Up is workforce development. Alderman Osborne stated that a major problem for most people is transportation, there is not enough cooperation from Chatham Area Transit (CAT), and some

will not allow public transportation to run through their communities. Alderman Bordeaux asked if Step Up will work with union groups, and Mr. Ramirez stated emphatically yes. He also stated that unions produce top positions, and a case in point is the pipefitter's union which generates some of the best jobs. He then introduced Tabeter Robinson and Isaac Felton who run the Apprentice Program and thanked them for doing an outstanding job. Alderman Johnson stated that there should be a better meshing of outreach programs because inmates that leave prison without any skills or hope will return to prison unless they have more training or job development opportunities. Alderman Shabazz asked if there was any collaboration with the Savannah Impact Program (SIP). Mr. Ramirez stated that they do work with SIP and will be meeting with them soon. Alderman Johnson noted the rising homeless issue. Alderman Sprague asked how many students they have per year, how good is the replacement rate, and who actually enters the program. Mr. Ramirez stated that primarily they focus on the young so they work a lot with Youth Build, and have individuals that are 18 years of age but also people in their 60's as well. They have also been asked to focus more on construction and diversify and reposition the program.

Alderman Sprague asked how many people per year are targeted for the program. Mr. Ramirez stated that their goal is 100 people per year, but they had to revamp and make modifications due to a reduction in staff. She then asked if 100 is an adequate number of people and he said no that it doesn't even scratch the surface. Alderman Shabazz commented that people are reading at a 5th grade level and asked if Step Up delves into the area of education. Mr. Ramirez stated that the organization hasn't gotten involved with education, but agrees it is a critical issue. Alderman Bordeaux stated that he appreciates the good job Step Up is doing. Alderman Hall says that ex-offenders should tell employers the truth about their past record and lay it all out on the table, and gives kudos to employers that gives people a second chance and employs ex-offenders. Alderman Johnson stated that as the City is preparing to build a new arena and is developing some large scale projects through (SPLOST), this may present an opportunity to be aggressive and insert specific conditions into the contracts as it relates to hiring ex-offenders during the bidding and RFP process.

Mr. Ramirez presented an overview of workforce development and wealth building with a description of the FINRA Foundation, a supporting work project with 10 employers, financial education, Bank on Savannah that is comprised of 10 local banks and FDIC, and information on volunteer tax assistance throughout the city. He concluded the presentation with a brief discussion of education and advocacy in the field of public policy and listed the Babcock Foundation & Georgia Legal Services, advocated for Savannah to be the first municipality in Georgia to create an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and the issues of predatory lending and food stamps. Suzanne Hobbit with Step Up spoke briefly about public policy. Alderman Shabazz thanked former Mayor Otis Johnson for being present at the work session and for his prior involvement with this program. Alderman Bell asked how their board holds the program accountable for outcomes. Mr. Ramirez stated that they have discussed this issue and how their program is doing, what are the right benchmarks and how do they compare to other organizations. Former Mayor Otis Johnson spoke and provided historical commentary on Step Up and the advantages of the program for the City of Savannah. He discussed the rate of poverty in Savannah over the years and stated that the time and commitment the City makes in this and other programs is an excellent investment especially in terms of the social returns. The Mayor thanked former Mayor Otis Johnson and then asked the Step Up members present to stand and introduce themselves. She told Mayor Johnson the project with Georgia Power, which began under his administration, was over and they had an unveiling today which is why she had to leave earlier. She brought the commemorative plaque which was the manhole cover on Bull

Street by Bryan Street. She said officials were there for the unveiling and she wanted to let him know since it was under his leadership.

Floridan Aquifer & Water Resources Update

John Sawyer gave an overview on the Floridan Aquifer and how it operates. He provided a background overview of Georgia vs. Alabama & Florida which involves the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers and also South Carolina vs. North Carolina involving the Catawba River. He stated he gave a similar presentation two years ago, but they definitely do not want a war over water rights, but this is an issue that needs reviewing. In June 2005, Governors Purdue and Sanford signed identical executive orders to create the Savannah River Committee. The Committee is comprised of seven members from each state and are appointed by their respective governors. The primary focus is to have sustainable use of the Savannah River Basin water resources and resolve how these resources are split up. Another focus is the total maximum daily load of the Savannah River and how much the river can actually take, and the saltwater intrusion of the Floridan Aquifer.

He provided a graph that outlined how the aquifer works, noting fresh water, the transition zone, saltwater, the confining unit and the general direction of the ground-water flow. He also displayed a graph that showed the predevelopment stage versus modern day. Alderman Shabazz asked for a definition of “predevelopment” and he stated that predevelopment would be back in the early to mid-1800’s prior to well drilling. Alderman Thomas commented on the issue of whom between Savannah and Hilton Head is responsible for the saltwater intrusion. Alderman Johnson asked when people pump their own water, do they get salt intrusion and does the issue have an impact on Savannah’s drinking water. Mr. Sawyer said yes this does impact the City’s drinking water because pumping 100,000 gallons per day does not require a permit; and thousands of gallons pumped will definitely have an adverse effect. He also stated that this controversy of saltwater intrusion has been discussed since the 1940’s and has not been resolved. He also stated that this is why the Industrial & Domestic (I & D) plant was implemented. Alderman Bordeaux stated that the City cannot conserve its way out, and Mr. Sawyer said that conservation plays a vital role, but is not the entire solution.

Alderman Sprague and Alderman Shabazz inquired about new and large businesses that need to access water, and Mr. Sawyer stated that Savannah still has the I & D plant and an adequate supply of surface water. Alderman Thomas asked who manages our southern region and who makes the water decisions for the mapped area on his chart. Mr. Sawyer replied that Jeff Larson with EPD manages that region and decision making also falls under EPD. Alderman Thomas also asked if the stories he has read regarding the inter basin and the Savannah River transfers damaging Abercorn Creek were still true and still going on, and Mr. Sawyer replied yes and this issue comes up every year. Additionally, he showed graphs depicting historical pumping in Savannah with no pumping on Hilton Head and historical pumping on Hilton Head with no pumping in Savannah. In 1997, Interim Strategy basically placed a moratorium on new withdrawals from the Upper Floridan Aquifer. In 2006, the final strategy divided coastal Georgia into three management zones and reduced all permitted withdrawal from the Upper Floridan Aquifer within Chatham County and Southern Effingham County to the 2004 actual withdrawal volume. Alderman Hall asked what role does the Georgia Water Association play in this area, and Mr. Sawyer said they deal with smaller regions but have no regulatory power. Alderman Thomas then asked for clarification regarding the limits of Greenville, SC. Mr. Sawyer stated that the city draws from surface water from the river whereas Savannah draws from underground wells.

He provided an explanation of the saltwater intrusion and stated that Savannah reduced from 31.120 million gallons per day (MGD) to 25.93 MGD, and reduced an additional 2.4 MGD to 23.53 MGD. He stated that the current average daily demand for Savannah is 25 MGD and said that the City is supplemented by surface water. He also stated that the best available modeling indicates a required reduction of over 97 percent of groundwater withdrawals in Chatham and Hilton Head to 'stop' saltwater intrusion on Hilton Head. Historically, they have always viewed I & D as a back-up system, but the Aquifer will be the back-up system for the future. Alderman Bordeaux asked if the rates for Savannah residents are one of the cheapest in the state and does it cover the total cost. Mr. Sawyer stated that it comes out of the general fund and from development. Alderman Sprague asked for the status on the river dredging issue, and he replied that a reservoir was suggested and it is 90 percent constructed. Alderman Bell inquired about the fiscal position, the response was they are in excellent shape, and she asked for an explanation of "excellent shape." Dick Evans, Director of Finance stated that the ten year funding plan depends on small, regular rate adjustments. Alderman Sprague then asked with the current utility fee structure, will the incremental increases get larger and larger, and is there any bond indebtedness. Mr. Evans stated that Savannah does have bond indebtedness and Standards & Poor (S & P) reviewed their credit and reaffirmed the City's AA+ credit rating for water and sewer and their regular credit rating is AA. Both he and the Mayor reiterated that there will be small but regular increases equal to the price of a can of coke per resident, and Alderman Osborne stated that it will be interesting to know what that amount will actually amount to.

Mr. Sawyer described potential engineered solutions for the saltwater intrusion that included desalination, fresh water injection, saltwater extraction, withdrawal reductions and combinations. He also discussed the potential 40 year cost range which is \$45 million - \$1.4 billion and stated that they continue to work on final solutions and funding mechanisms.

Regulations Governing Gun Shows

The Mayor stated that they have discussed the gun shows coming to their community, and that Alderman Johnson reviewed this and discovered that the state has jurisdiction over this. Alderman Johnson stated that he and Alderman Bell were both at a neighborhood meeting where they listened to comments from city residents and he wonders if they are being duplicitous in allowing gun shows in city facilities. Alderman Thomas says he raised the issue of gun shows at the civic center 10 years ago and then City Attorney Blackburn said it couldn't be done. He stated it was a 2nd amendment issue and the city would not win that fight. He said the new city attorneys sent out an opinion to everyone which basically makes the same argument as Mr. Blackburn. He believes the real issue is illegal guns out on the street and that guns bought at civic center gun shows are not the ones used by criminals. He said there are also other venues that have gun shows so they will have to look at all of the factors and facilities involved. Alderman Hall also has concerns with the civic center gun shows and says he knows the City would not allow lewd and obscene shows to be held at the civic center even though this would also involve amendment rights. He also said the amount of funerals they go to because of gun violence is yet another reason to halt the gun shows. Alderman Bell stated that there might be a legal way to approach this issue and said that Alderman Thomas suggested they should engage the community. He stated that yes they should get feedback from residents as they do need public involvement. Alderman Bordeaux thought that taking a legal route would only lead to a court battle that would cost the tax payers a lot of money since the state legislature trumps them and the City would ultimately lose in court. Alderman Johnson stated that Council has no control over the issue of gun shows and wants Savannah residents to realize that the State law mandates that we have gun shows. Alderman Shabazz stated that if the people continue to stand up and voice their opinion against this gun violence they can make a difference. Alderman

Johnson reiterated that the public needs to know that this is up to the state legislature. Alderman Bordeaux said that gun shows are not subject to the same laws as gun shops and asked what we are doing to protect our local businesses that pay taxes versus the gun shows that don't. The Mayor stated that we are not holding the guns shows accountable, and wondered if they were making it too easy for gun shows and asked if Council had the authority to set policy on civic center rentals. She also asked if they have the authority to make gun shows abide by the same laws and regulations that pawn shops are under. Alderman Bell asked for the difference between regulate and prohibit and Mr. Stillwell stated that on February 6, 2013 he sent Council a Wall Street Journal article on this issue. He also stated that the city legislature cannot prohibit guns shows as they do not have that power. Alderman Thomas said his major concern is what the City is doing to get illegal guns off the streets. Alderman Johnson said they need to conduct an anatomy on confiscated guns to find out the entire journey from the seller to the use of the illegal weapon.

The Mayor asked Stephanie Cutter, Acting City Manager to meet with Police Chief Lovett to bring Council their data on illegal guns on the streets and their plan of action. Alderman Shabazz agreed and says they should not drag their feet on this because they need to send a message to residents that the City is not going to tolerate this ongoing gun violence. Alderman Bell also feels citizens need to know that Council has limited power and Alderman Osborne said they also need to check on felons who have recently been released from prison. Alderman Hall says they have people who are trying to twist 2nd amendment rights. They are not trying to stop people from legally owning guns, but want the violence from illegal guns to stop.

Executive Session

Upon a motion by Alderman Johnson, seconded by Alderman Shabazz and unanimously carried, approval was given to go into Executive Session to discuss litigation.

Upon a motion by Alderman Johnson seconded by Alderman Shabazz and unanimously carried, approval was given to come out of Executive Session where no votes were taken.

Council broke for lunch

Acting City Manager Stephanie Cutter presented the City Manager's Briefing of the agenda items for the Council Meeting of February 7, 2013. The agenda is attached and made a part of the permanent record.

Mayor Jackson adjourned this meeting.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Dyanne C. Reese", written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Dyanne C. Reese, MMC, Clerk of Council